

# **Scarlet Fever**

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## **What is scarlet fever?**

Scarlet fever, sometimes called scarlatina, is a disease caused by a bacteria called group A *Streptococcus* or "group A strep", the same bacteria that causes strep throat. Scarlet fever is a rash that sometimes occurs in people that have strep throat. The rash is usually seen in children between the age of 5 and 18, but can occur at any age.

## **How is scarlet fever spread?**

Scarlet fever is usually spread through direct, intimate, or close contact – hugging, kissing, and close face-to-face contact with a person who has the disease. The bacteria are carried through the air in droplets from coughing or sneezing. People are most contagious a day or two before the rash appears and for four to five days after. When treated with the proper medicine, people are no longer contagious after 24 hours.

## **What are the symptoms of scarlet fever?**

Symptoms generally begin one to five days after exposure. Early symptoms of scarlet fever include fever, sore throat, chills, vomiting, and abdominal pain. The tongue may have a whitish coating and appear swollen. The tongue may also appear to have a “strawberry”-like appearance (red and bumpy). One to two days after the onset of illness, a fine red skin rash that looks like a sunburn and feels like a rough piece of sandpaper. The rash appears most often on the neck, chest, in folds of the arm pits and groin, and inner surfaces of the thigh. After the rash is gone, the skin on the tips of fingers and toes may peel.

## **What is the treatment for scarlet fever?**

Call your doctor. Scarlet fever can be treated with antibiotics, bed rest, sufficient fluids, and Tylenol (as recommended by your doctor).

## **Are there complications from scarlet fever?**

Most cases of scarlet fever are mild and should be no concern if treated properly. However, complications could arise. Acute rheumatic fever of the joints and the heart, ear infections, skin infections, pneumonia, and acute kidney disease are possible complications. Watch for these additional symptoms and seek treatment immediately if they develop: high fever (greater than 102 °F), joint pain and swelling, blood in the urine, earache, or inflamed glands of the neck.

## **How can scarlet fever be prevented?**

Use tissues to catch coughs and sneezes and throw used tissues into the trash. Wash hands after wiping or blowing nose, coughing, and sneezing. Wash hands before preparing food. Make sure your children practice good handwashing techniques. Do not share eating or drinking utensils.

## How do I get more information on scarlet fever?

Calhoun County Public Health Department

Phone: (269) 969-6383

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

Website: [http://www.cdc.gov/ncidod/dbmd/diseaseinfo/scarletfever\\_g.htm](http://www.cdc.gov/ncidod/dbmd/diseaseinfo/scarletfever_g.htm)

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This fact sheet is meant to provide general health information and is not intended to be medical advice or otherwise take the place of your doctor's orders or to diagnose your specific health problems. Check with your doctor if you have any questions or concerns about your health.

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